
Application for WREN Scholarships to attend PA Growing Smarter Conference

Narrative:

AMD&ART is a nonprofit organization that is artfully transforming environmental liabilities into community assets in Southwestern Pennsylvania. The AMD&ART process is one that combines public art, environmental improvement and community engagement in treating acid mine drainage (AMD). AMD&ART has taken a holistic approach to re-creating place, incorporating recreational elements, artful spaces, educational opportunities, historic reminders and restored wildlife habitat into designs for passive AMD treatment systems. This approach honors a past of hard work and community building, bringing that same civic engagement to the design and construction of treatment systems that clean polluted waters, reach people, restore nature and revitalize abandoned spaces.

AMD&ART's pilot project in Vintondale serves as a model of inclusive, interdisciplinary environmental problem solving. Community members, along with a team of artists, landscape architects, and historians, participated in the design of this AMD treatment system and community park. The Vintondale site is situated on thirty-five acres of reclaimed mine land, bordered by the Ghost Town Rail Trail, which is traveled by 70,000 hikers and bicyclists each year. The AMD discharge at Vintondale is relatively small and manageable; a passive treatment system and wetlands will cleanse the water of metallic pollutants and raise the pH to a healthy, neutral level.

Visitors will come to the Vintondale site for a variety of reasons: to see an historically important coal mining site, to view birds and wildlife, to gain a better understanding of the science behind AMD and its treatment, and to learn how community based initiatives can restore the environment to health. AMD&ART is working with the residents of Vintondale to interpret the natural and historical features of the site and to develop recreational amenities and a small community environmental education center. The Vintondale site, once the bustling center of work and life in this company town, will again be a vital part of community life.

In Somerset County, AMD&ART initiated the Dark Shade Brownfields Project. The Dark Shade Creek Watershed was the first AMD impacted watershed recognized as a brownfield by the EPA. The Dark Shade Brownfields Project brings serious commitment on the part of many federal and state agencies to a single, small watershed. Dark Shade Creek is the most polluted stem of the most polluted river in Western Pennsylvania, its watershed a blighted landscape pocked by hundreds of acres of abandoned industrial sites, former mine lands, boney piles, and twenty-one AMD discharges. Three of these discharges release more than a thousand gallons per minute. Pre-regulatory coal mining and industrial abandonment have had a devastating environmental impact on this watershed. The mission of the Dark Shade Brownfields Project is to address the real and perceived contamination that hinders redevelopment.

The Brownfields Project helped community members launch the Shade Creek Watershed Association, which has taken responsibility for collecting water samples and monitoring the health of streams within the watershed. Also, the Brownfields Project and AMD&ART have spurred the creation of a watershed restoration and brownfields redevelopment plan that is driven and supported by the local community. The goal of this plan is to stimulate economic growth and to create opportunities for commercial business, recreational trails, and AMD treatment systems that are incorporated into community parks.

AmeriCorps volunteers are responsible for much of the success of AMD&ART and the Brownfields Project. These volunteers educate and involve community members in AMD remediation efforts. The effectiveness of these AmeriCorps volunteers hinges upon their ability to link communities with ideas and resources from throughout Pennsylvania, and beyond. The Growing Smarter conference is precisely the kind of training opportunity that allows our AmeriCorps volunteers to help communities be better stewards of their water resources. The Growing Smarter conference will elucidate the connections between sound land use practices and water resources protection.

AmeriCorps Volunteers:

Jill Byers, Dark Shade Outreach Coordinator
Damion Ciotti, Dark Shade Project Coordinator
Jessica Johnson, Vintondale Project Coordinator
Ellen Micoli, AMD&ART Program Coordinator
Shannon Peterson, Environmental Education Coordinator
Dana Serovy, AMD&ART Communications Coordinator

Contact:

Dana Serovy
AMD&ART, Inc.
411 Third Avenue
Johnstown, PA 15906
Phone 814.539.5357

Expenses:

Our anticipated expenses are minimal. AMD&ART will pay travel expenses, and our resourceful AmeriCorps volunteers have found lodging in the vicinity. Our only request for the Water Resources Education Network is scholarship funding to cover the registration fees for six AmeriCorps volunteers at \$75 each, for a total of \$450.



**THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS**
OF PENNSYLVANIA
CITIZEN EDUCATION FUND

Sherene Hess, Project Director
Water Resources Education Network
145 Apple Lane
Indiana, PA 15701
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fax: (724) 465-4953
email: sherenchess@yourinter.net

RE: Training Scholarship

Dana Serovy, Communications Coordinator
AMD & ART, Inc.
411 Third Avenue
Johnstown, Pennsylvania 15906

March 8, 2001

Dear Dana:

The Water Resources Education Network (WREN) has received your request for a training scholarship covering the registration fees for up to four employees of the AMD & ART to attend the "Growing Smarter: Land Use in Pennsylvania" conference held in Hershey, Pennsylvania on March 18-20, 2001. WREN is pleased to support you and AMD & ART, Inc. with the following amount of funding:

Registration	\$ 285.00
Travel	\$ 0.00
Lodging	\$ 0.00
Total	\$ 285.00

To receive reimbursement for these expenses, please complete the attached form and return. Also, remember to attach receipts (originals, if possible) to document your expenses. WREN will issue a reimbursement check within two to three weeks after I receive your completed forms.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions. Thank you for your efforts in protecting Pennsylvania's water resources.

Very sincerely yours,

Sherene Hess, Project Director
Water Resources Education Network
A Project of the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizen Education Fund

Water Resources Education Network

Training Scholarship Reimbursement Form

scholarship sponsored by the

Water Resources Education Network

a project of the

League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania- Citizen Education Fund

supported by funds from the

Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection

Scholarship Applicant (individual and/or organization; indicate who check should be made to:)

AMDART, Inc.

Mailing address: 411 Third Avenue City: Johnstown Zip: 15906

Phone: 814.539.5357 Fax: 814.539.4345 Email: amdart@gte.net

Training Attended (Conference title and city and county where held): _____

Growing Smarter: Land Use in Pennsylvania Hershey, PA

If you do not receive WREN's *Water Policy News* newsletter, would you like to be on the mailing list at no cost?

☒ yes ☐ no

Expenses requested for reimbursement:

Item	Amount	Receipts attached?
Registration	\$ <u>285.00</u>	<u>yes.</u>
Lodging	\$ <u>—</u>	
Travel (tolls, mileage*)	\$ <u>—</u>	

*note that mileage is reimbursed at a rate of \$.25 per mile

After attending this training, can you describe briefly how it might benefit your community's efforts to protect its water resources? (Attach report if you wish.)

Report attached.

Submit Reimbursement Form to:

Sherene Hess, Project Director
Water Resources Education Network
145 Apple Lane
Indiana, PA 15701
Revised August, 2000

Telephone: 724 465 4978

Fax: 724 465 4953

Email: sherenhess@yourinter.net

WREN website: <http://pa.lwv.org/wren>

Report to the Water Resources Education Network

Six AmeriCorps members with AMD&ART and the Brownfields Project attended the "Growing Smarter: Land Use in Pennsylvania" conference. AMD&ART and the Brownfields Project take an interdisciplinary approach to AMD remediation and community revitalization. The Growing Smarter Conference, too, was interdisciplinary; AmeriCorps members attended sessions on historic preservation, greenspace initiatives, regional planning, brownfields redevelopment, community collaboration, and rural issues. As we continue our work in Vintondale, Cambria County, and in the Dark Shade Creek Watershed in Somerset County, the ideas and strategies we learned at this conference will enhance our ability to help these communities use their land wisely and protect their water resources.

Land use is a pressing issue in Vintondale, for after a wait of many years, the borough will soon have sufficient water and sewage service to permit new development. For this reason, Vintondale will be required to adopt a land use plan. AMD&ART has worked with a doctoral student from the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry to conduct "visioning workshops" in Vintondale. The goal of these workshops was to identify community assets and needs, particularly related to land use. Vintondale residents expressed their desire to preserve historic buildings, to protect open space and recreational amenities, and to provide adequate, affordable housing for seniors in the heart of this small town. At the Growing Smarter conference, AmeriCorps volunteers with AMD&ART were able to identify resources and make contacts that can help implement some of the ideas introduced in the Vintondale visioning workshops.

AMD&ART's main mission in Vintondale is to develop an AMD treatment system and community park, and our AmeriCorps volunteers were able to make contacts and identify potential sources of funding for completing this project. For example, one of the components of the site that we plan to build is a footbridge that will cross the South Branch of Blacklick Creek, linking the town of Vintondale to a recreational area. At the Growing Smarter Conference we were able to find out more about TEA-21 funding that may support the construction of this footbridge.

This conference was also helpful for the Brownfields Project, which was initiated by AMD&ART and the Borough of Central City. The Brownfields Project has created a watershed restoration and brownfields redevelopment plan for the Dark Shade Creek Watershed. The goal of this plan is to stimulate economic growth and to create opportunities for commercial business, recreational trails, and AMD treatment systems that are incorporated into community parks. The Growing Smarter Conference gave the Brownfields Project new contacts to help implement this plan.

One of the small communities within the Dark Shade Creek Watershed is Gahagen, which is home to about sixty people. AMD&ART and the Brownfields Project are working with Gahagen residents to build an AMD treatment system and community park, similar to the one in Vintondale but on a smaller scale. Gahagen lacks a sewage treatment system, so sewage is straight-piped into a nearby creek. The Growing Smarter Conference, again, was an invaluable source of information on how to confront water pollution problems in this rural community.

We wish to thank the Water Resources Education Network, once more, for the opportunity to attend the Growing Smarter conference. The exchange of ideas at this conference was very fruitful, presenting many more opportunities for AMD&ART and the communities we work with than are possible to list here. Our AmeriCorps volunteers returned from this conference with a renewed enthusiasm and fresh inspiration from the hundreds of people and organizations that are working for smarter land use and a better environment in Pennsylvania.